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Gramsci in green: Neoliberal hegemony through urban forestry and the potential for a political ecology of praxis

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ABSTRACT

The US Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources coordinate the distribution of urban forestry grants to nonprofits and citizen groups. These granting agencies increased state funding during a period of neoliberal, fiscal austerity in order to channel ecosystem services provided by urban forests. Increased funding is an instance of rollout neoliberalism whereby the fiscally austere state builds market capacity to harness these services as part of an ecologically modernist agenda. A Gramscian perspective and data gathered from 20 in-depth interviews with foresters are used in this paper to theorize how rollout policy is deployed through urban forestry to extend market hegemony to new geographies. This is anything but a smooth process because the public's perception of urban trees is highly varied. State bureaucracies must build civil sector capacity to educate people about the ecosystem services trees provide as market commodities. In doing so the state's market-oriented regulatory legitimacy is consolidated through the apparently benign act of promoting urban forestry. This dialectical process limits participation in urban forestry because markets are inherently selective. Yet it potentially gives rise to an alternative political ecology of praxis beyond market ideology when grant recipients participate in the production of urban ecology and recognize their relationship with nature.

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1. Introduction

Trees are documented to provide numerous ecosystem services in urban settings (Nowak and Dwyer, 2000). Studies demonstrate urban trees provide relief from the urban heat island effect while decreasing costly energy consumption, for example (Heisler, 1986; Heisler et al., 1995). Other studies suggest urban trees increase in situ storm water retention (Sanders, 1986) and ameliorate air pollution (Nowak, 1994). Yet others determined urban trees also provide socio-psychological benefits like attachment to place (Chenoweth and Gobster, 1990) and the mitigation of environmental fatigue (Pitt et al., 1979). All of these ecosystem services provided by urban trees supposedly contribute to the market value of urban private property (Morales et al., 1976; Anderson and Cordell, 1988). Wolf (2005) and Joye et al. (2010) even go so far as to propose shoppers spend more money in business districts lined with mature trees. These studies assign real dollar values to the 'work' trees do in urban settings. Therefore the potential values of ecosystem services provided by trees have no doubt captured the imaginations of policy makers – particularly in an era of urban fiscal austerity.

It should not be surprising then that environmental regulatory agencies operating in the US are keen to promote the cost-saving ecosystem services of trees to local governments and citizens alike. The Chairperson of the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council interviewed for this study described why it makes economic sense to promote trees in the city. He said:

> Urban forestry... can be considered a dynamic green infrastructure. Hard-scape infrastructures, even with maintenance, tend to devalue, or decrease in value as they age. Trees actually increase in value with age if they are maintained properly. If you spend ten dollars today on tree maintenance, as a property owner or municipality, you are likely to reap the investment back, plus interest into the future. Often, that does not happen with solid infrastructures.

This quote and the studies thus mentioned promote urban forestry as a market-based environmental practice justified on the assignment of prices to separate aspects of the ecosystem services trees provide in cities (see also Robertson, 2004). The pricing of ecosystem services through urban forestry is really an ecological modernist approach to regulating the relationships between people, the economy, and the environment.

Hajer (1996) and Desfor and Keil (2004) define ecological modernization in part as a technocratic project designed to green

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capitalism in ways that mediate the tensions between market-based society and its inevitable environmental degradations. It is posited as a win–win situation where ecological solutions are built into capitalist market mechanisms in ways that promote, rather than hinder, economic development. Services provided by urban trees, in this sense, are used to facilitate consumption by supposedly mitigating the negative effects of consumer culture, for example (Cohen, 2004). But as Desfor and Keil point out (2004, p. 58), the success of various forms of ecological modernization "is linked to the degree of sustainability in the social modes of regulation in which they are embedded." This means ecological modernization, including the promotion of ecosystem services by urban trees, is a normative political project that seeks to (re)establish the social regulatory role of the state (see also Christoff, 1996). Thus, for example, state-sponsored ecological modernist projects are deployed that use urban trees to teach marginalized urban residents how to more fully participate in market-based society (Perkins, 2009a).

Urban forestry has not been funded comprehensively by Federal and state governments in the US despite its normative potential as an ecological modernist approach to market expansion. Public funding for urban trees is traditionally a localized and varied process, instead (Conway and Urbani, 2007). But closer scrutiny of the history of government funding for urban forestry in the US reveals a meager level of Federal funding for urban forests was established in 1978 and increased modestly in 1990. At first glance it appears paradoxical that US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service expenditures on urban trees were *increased* (NUCFAC, 2004) during the time when other Federal programs for social and material infrastructures were diminished (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). More Federal funding for urban forestry likely is an instance of what Peck and Tickell (2002) refer to as 'rollout' neoliberalism whereby government support is increased for programs that profitably build market capacity into various service provisions (see also Peck, 2004). It would be, however, an oversimplification to leave the story of funding for urban forestry at that.

A Gramscian perspective is thus deployed in this paper to demonstrate state funding for urban forestry is an ecological modernist attempt to extend market-based, neoliberal hegemony where it previously has not existed. It is argued in the following sections of this paper that: (1) the public's perception of urban trees is anything but uniform and ubiquitous. Therefore the integral state hires its own intellectuals to educate people about the ecosystem services trees provide as market commodities; and (2) the ethical state's regulatory legitimacy is consolidated by consent and coercion based aspects of civil sector capacity building in urban forestry. This dialectical process limits, yet potentially gives rise to, an alternative political ecology of praxis that can build socio-natural hegemony without capitalist, market ideology.

These findings result from qualitative data collected during 20 in-depth interviews with urban foresters, government forestry officials, and representatives from nonprofits concerned with urban trees. The interviewees were chosen on the basis that they work primarily to promote urban forestry. All the interviewees were asked to describe: how trees compare to other forms of infrastructure, the goals of their respective organizations in promoting urban forestry while educating the public, the ways public forestry dollars flow through different levels of government, and also how those public monies are in turn redistributed into the civil (nonprofit and for-profit) urban forestry sector. A simple scalar approach was used to categorize interviewees according to the spatial extent of their influence.

Interviewees at the national level work for agencies that primarily distribute Federal monies for urban forestry efforts to the state level. They include a Program Leader from the USDA Forest Service-Northeast Region, an Urban and Community Forestry Program Coordinator from the USDA Forest Service-Northeast Region, and a representative from the nonprofit *National Alliance for Community Trees*. The latter organization assists other agencies in applying for and utilizing urban forestry dollars the USDA Forest Service distributes. Interviewees at the state level include the Urban and Community Forestry Manager for the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, five Regional Urban and Community Forestry Coordinators from the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Chairperson of the *Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council*. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources receives USDA Forest Service funds and works closely with the *Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council* to facilitate the expenditure of public forestry funds at the local level. Interviewees at the local level have applied for and received public funding from the Wisconsin Urban and Community Forestry Program. They include a Forestry Service Manager for the City of Milwaukee, the Parks and Forestry Supervisor for the community of Wauwatosa, WI, the foresters for the City of Waukesha, WI; Village of Fox Point, WI; Village of Shorewood, WI; City of Appleton, WI; City of Green Bay, WI, and a representative from the nonprofit urban forestry organization *Greening Milwaukee*. A representative from *Greening of Detroit* was also interviewed as that organization was the model for starting up *Greening Milwaukee*.

2. The integral state, pedagogy, and neoliberal hegemony

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Communist, is perhaps best known for his work concerning hegemony while interned in a Fascist prison. He was a student of Marxism who engaged the writings of Lenin and was interested in the relationship between ideology, material practice, and political power. In particular, Gramsci believed a proletarian revolution like the one in Russia was not possible in states in the West, because "...there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks..." (1971, p. 238). He thus conceived of an 'integral state' in the West as a dialectical unity of political and civil societies where hegemonic power of the ruling class is diffused across multiple classes, thereby making typical revolutionary wars with overt acts of force improbable (1971).

Hegemony in the integral state is extended in part by juridical institutions of political society that sanction an 'ensemble of organisms commonly called private' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). Gramsci goes onto suggest these organisms in the civil sector include churches, schools, trade unions, and the like that work to (re)organize 'common sense' among society's non-ruling classes. Hegemony is based on Gramsci's expanded definition of common sense that includes consent for 'proper' ways of organizing the social and material world. Thus common sense is also the ideology or conception by which people validate their day-to-day, functional position in any given political, economic, and cultural system. Common sense, though necessarily incomplete and often contradictory, is deeply rooted in folklore and influenced by philosophy, religion, and science (Crehan, 2002). Thus the integral state never completely dictates its own form of common sense among non-ruling classes, but must instead work through civil sector organisms to (re)construct and/or harness it to the greatest extent possible. However, in dialectical relation with consent, coercion by the juridical arm of political society is reserved for classes that resist prevailing modes of common sense, and by extension, ruling class hegemony.

Gramsci also wrote that hegemony's basis in consent and coercion is fundamentally a pedagogical relation (1971). Here Gramsci says the integral state must necessarily be an 'ethical state' defined by its ability to molecularly garner consent/power through its civil

sector institutions. He said (1971, p. 258): "...every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interest of the ruling classes..." He solidified this position when he went onto say (1971, p. 259), "The State does have and request consent, but it also 'educates' this consent, by means of the political and syndical associations; these, however, are private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling classes." The intellectuals who lead these associations are pedagogically crucial to the function of hegemony.

Divisions of labor in any social and economic formation give rise to intellectuals that are capable with their expertise and prestige of disseminating information that (re)constructs ideology in relation to the prevailing hegemonic circumstances. Traditional intellectuals operate within bureaucracies that represent the interests of the juridical state apparatus itself. Gramsci describes them as "the dominant group's deputies exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12; see also Forgacs, 2000; Thomas, 2009). These people have the ability to throw their support behind various ruling class alliances/interests and so affect constellations of political and economic power through the promotion of common sense that reinforces dominant forms of hegemony. But intellectual activity is not relegated solely to state bureaucrats alone.

Gramsci wrote (1971, p. 8), "The methodological error with the widest diffusion seems to me to be that of seeking the essential characteristic in the intrinsic features of the intellectual activity and not instead in the system of relations in which it (or the grouping which embodies it) is found in the general complex of social relations." Gramsci thus believed that *every* subordinate class is capable of forming their own organic intellectuals in relation to their social struggles within hegemony. This is especially the case when these new intellectuals wed their knowledge with a new political commitment. Gramsci therefore challenges the concept of traditional intellectuals when he says, "the real philosopher is, and cannot be other than, the politician, the active man [sic] who modifies the environment, understanding by environment the ensemble of relations which each of us enters to take part in" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 352). These new philosophers are aware of the contradictions in predominant forms of common sense under ruling-class hegemony.

But, how relevant are Gramsci's writings about intellectuals, the integral/ethical state, and commonsense to *current* concerns? Thomas presciently answers (2009, p. xviii), "...it is sometimes precisely the distance of Gramsci's thought from the 'main currents' of the present that make it all the more urgent to engage with the critical perspectives he provides us." In other words, it is imperative to construct organically intellectual projects that interrogate and subvert the ways that hegemony operates through everyday lived experiences in the contemporary context (Eckers et al., 2009; Mann, 2009). However, Femia (1981) and Morton (2003) say that in order to accomplish this goal, contemporary research endeavors from a Gramscian perspective must also be explicitly political and grounded in concrete historical relations and contexts.

Geographers in particular have used these Gramscian principles to investigate the demise of the Keynesian national welfare state and the shift toward neoliberal capitalism (Peck and Tickell, 1992; Jessop, 2002). They note that in Keynesianism's former regulatory role is a 30-year tide of political economic reforms that hearken back to the liberal era that preceded it. These reforms are part of an ideological project originally intended to redress the stagnation of Fordist capital accumulation that first occurred during the 1970s (Peck, 2001; Harvey, 2005). It is difficult to adequately account for varied processes of neoliberalization as a product of an over-arching hegemonic ideology. But geographers noted there are threads linking neoliberal ideology as a regulatory project with the hegemonic goal of increasing the integral state's civil sector capacity to manage its social and economic affairs profitably rather than equitably (Desfor and Keil, 2004). For instance, neoliberal ideology promotes market initiatives as common sense solutions to social and economic problems (Jessop, 2002; Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Neoliberalization thus requires intensified government fiscal austerity and policies designed to open profitable market opportunities for the private (civil) sector to provide services formerly the charge of the welfare state (Wolch, 1990; Cope, 2001). Workfare training programs for the poor, for example, have since replaced much welfare spending and provide capital a source of exploitable, low-wage labor (Peck and Tickell, 2002). Proponents of neoliberal ideology also widely espouse the local regulatory environment as a better scale at which to make management decisions concerning economic growth. Predominant logics of place-based competitiveness (Harvey, 2005) operate locally through tax incentives that promote entrepreneurialism (Ward, 2007) over social welfare and the market transfer of public infrastructures (Brenner et al., 2002) including urban parks (Perkins, 2009b) to the private realm for its own profit.

A parallel literature also emerged from scholars who recognize the environment has become novel ideological terrain for the expansion of profitable market hegemony (see, for example, McCarthy and Prudham, 2004; Heynen and Robbins, 2005). Associated acts of damaging deregulation have reduced the number and efficacy of extant environmental laws believed by neoliberal ideologues to hinder profitable market expansion into heretofore unknown geographies (McCarthy, 2006, 2007; Prudham, 2007). Additional findings by Cohen (2004), Bakker (2005), Prudham (2005), Heynen and Perkins (2005), McCarthy (2006), Robertson (2007), and Loftus and Lumsden (2008) suggest the integral state is consolidating its neoliberal hegemony through construction of civil sector capacity to (re)regulate our relation to nature, including water and forests, as market commodities dis-embedded from their ecological contexts. Harvey notes these profit-oriented policy maneuvers are espoused by political elites with the goal of mobilizing nature in order to divert ever-greater portions of the total social product toward capital (1996, 2005).

But the question of consent and coercion still remains in many of these accounts of neoliberal hegemony through the expansion of market ideology and relations. In other words, the question of how these market transformations are legitimized, internalized, or even resisted within the larger population leaves room for additional scrutiny and theorization. Barnett perhaps captures this concern best in his harsh criticism of neoliberalism considered hegemony (2005, p. 9):

> The attraction of the concept of hegemony is supposed to lie in its broadening out of the ways in which political domination is meant to operate... But the recurrent feature of the political-economy invocation of hegemony is that it lacks any clear sense of how consent is actually secured, or any convincing account of how hegemonic projects are anchored at the level of everyday life, other than implying that this works by "getting at" people in some way or other.

This concern about how power 'gets at people' is perhaps best addressed by following the work of Krippner (2007) in terms of thinking about how state policy objectives operate *through* markets. As she suggests, 'free' markets appear apolitical which makes them seem independent of statist influence. But markets are actually an ideal medium to convey- and also obfuscate- statist experiments in institutional innovations (like monetary policy) that ultimately contribute to regulation of the larger economy. We

can apply this kind of analysis to market-mediated ecosystem services, particularly those provided by urban forests, to better understand how neoliberal hegemony is extended into new geographies through statist promotions of trees.

2.1. Neoliberal hegemony through urban forest ecosystem services

The USDA Forest Service and state agencies like the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) promote urban trees as providers of services socially and economically beneficial to people living in cities. The USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCFP) mission statement reads in part (2011):

> The USDA Forest Service and State Forestry Agencies, in partnership with national and local organizations, provide a comprehensive approach to the stewardship of urban trees and forest resources. This approach helps ensure the vitality of communities by engaging people where they live, work, and play.

The UCFP is in partnership with the state-level WDNR Urban and Community Forestry Program (WUCFP). The WUCFP mission statement is quite similar and reads in part (2011):

> The mission of the DNR Forestry's urban forestry program is to encourage and enable sound management of Wisconsin's urban forest ecosystems. DNR urban forestry staff assist community officials, green industry professionals, businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, the general public and others who impact the resource to work together to expand, improve and manage the urban forest.

These mission statements suggest the UCFP and WUCFP recognize that not everyone has the same concerns about urban forestry stewardship and associated ecosystem services.

In fact UCFP and WUCFP operate across a vast and uneven landscape for urban forestry in the US and in states like Wisconsin. This is because no predominant conception exists concerning the role of urban trees, or of people's roles in caring for them. In fact there are many different views of what urban forestry should be that has much to do with income and housing tenure (Perkins et al., 2004), race and ethnicity (Heynen et al., 2006), gender (Heynen et al., 2007), cultural backgrounds (Campanella, 2003), and geographic location, among others (Grove et al., 2006). From a Gramscian perspective it becomes evident that 'common sense' regarding trees in the city is not uniform within and among urban geographies, and certainly does not always embrace an ecosystems services point of view. Interviewees for this project bear this out.

The Program Leader for the USDA Forest Service-Northeastern Region suggests the perception of trees and who is responsible for them varies considerably between US regions. He said New Englanders and Midwesterners value trees in their cities as culturally symbolic amenities. Thus they tend to support government programs to plant and care for them- especially in light of the damage wrought by Dutch elm disease. He went onto say that people living in the South and in the West generally value urban trees but encourage voluntary organizations to care for them instead of large government programs. Even greater variations in the perception of urban trees and their stewardship are found at smaller scales of analysis.

Interviewees say this is certainly the case across the state of Wisconsin. One WUCFP regional coordinator who works to promote urban forestry in the northern part of the state said it is difficult to get residents there to believe the trees in their towns and villages provide valuable services. He said this is because "in many parts of my region they can walk two miles out of their town, or a hundred yards out of their town and there is a forest there." In contrast, another WUCFP regional coordinator working in the more urbanized, southeastern part of the state had a different problem trying to promote the ecosystem services provided by urban forests. She said: "Many people don't realize that cities can be forested... but we have been trying to get the idea across to people that you live in a forest even if its downtown Milwaukee. It may not be what they envision, but it is a forest. It's a hard connection for anybody to make."

Evidence suggests that in some instances trees are *resisted* in inner-city, African- American neighborhoods. The interviewee from *Greening Milwaukee* stated it is frequently difficult to get inner-city neighborhoods to participate in forestry efforts because they are concerned about tree maintenance and property damage. The interviewee who coordinates community outreach for *Greening of Detroit* agreed with this assessment and said in regard to promoting trees in these locations:

> It is definitely an uphill battle. Most don't want trees. We have had people yell at us for planting trees on their block. Imagine that you own property and a house and you try your very best to keep it up and the city has a street tree that is over your roof, you have had to replace your roof, it interferes with the power lines, it tears up the sidewalk, it drops leaves and fruits onto the ground that has to be cleaned up... So if I put a tree in front of their house, they get pissed off.

These interviewees demonstrate urban forestry advocates cannot just go into any community and plant trees there. People have indifferent, and sometimes even antagonistic, notions of trees in the city. Agencies like UCFP, WUCFP, *Greening Milwaukee*, and *Greening of Detroit* do a great deal of outreach to educate communities about ecosystem services derived from urban forests. The *Greening of Detroit* interviewee went onto say:

> But if I ask them before hand and I explain to them that it will help with their heating and cooling, that we plant a lot of trees to buffer communities from thoroughfares or expressways that are noisy and polluting, that these trees will clean the air and provide habitat for all the birds that they like to see. It is definitely something where the very best circumstances involve multiple meetings with community stakeholders to let them know the benefits of trees and how they will improve property values.

It is this kind of ecosystem services promotion that first prompted Congress to pass the Cooperative Forest Assistance Act (CFAA) in 1978 (NUCFAC, 2004). The amount of money dedicated to UCFP by the act was rather small at only three million US dollars per year. However, CFAA was amended in 1990 to increase the amount of funding available to the USDA Forest Service UCFP to thirty-six million dollars per year. Over 500 million dollars have been distributed to the US states and territories since then. Most states, like Wisconsin, choose to redistribute money through competitive granting procedures. Ultimately the UCFP partners with state organizations like WUCFP and nonprofit organizations like *Greening Milwaukee* and *Greening of Detroit* to channel Federal funds into the promotion of urban forestry-related ecosystems services. In doing so, UCFP and its partners attempt to turn chaotic and varied geographies concerning beliefs about urban trees into a coherent whole based on principles of ecological modernization.

It is on this basis that CFAA money was increased for UCFP during a time of heightened Federal fiscal austerity. The 1990 UCFP enhancement is therefore a 'rollout' neoliberalization because the state enhanced its financial commitment to developing a market mechanism to promote and regulate a range of cost-saving/profitable ecosystem services provided by trees. This is possible because the UCFP is designed to open up urban forestry to a range of actors

supposedly *outside* the government. The Program Leader for the Northeastern Region of the USDA Forest Service who works closely with the UCFP described the situation plainly: "The Forestry Service does not believe that urban forestry at the municipal level is a sustainable program without functioning nonprofits to assist in such endeavors." Thus the money from UCFP is directed to generate a market for civil sector urban forestry operations that assist, and are yet independent of, efforts by public agencies. The program's strategy to foster market mechanisms for civil sector provision for urban forests has worked. The UCFP coordinator who was interviewed for this project commented:

> Back in 1990... we went from a 2.5 million dollar budget for urban forestry, which resulted in tens of thousands of dollars going into each state, to where we started receiving 25 million in one year, so we had this ten times increase. What that meant was, instead of giving a state 20,000 or 30,000 thousand dollars for their programs... we were now giving them 200,000 or more dollars. The states then hired on staff, were doing grants, there was just this amazing explosion of [nonprofit] activity.

WUCFP in particular is a good example of a state agency that used increased UCFP funding in 1990 to start a granting process to build civil sector capacity for managing urban forestry. Over 1000 grants have been distributed in Wisconsin since the start of WUCFP in 1992. Most of the grants awarded are between 1000 and 3000 US dollars but some are as large as 25,000 dollars. The strength of the WUCFP, according to its program supervisor interviewed for this project, is not found in the relatively small amount of money awarded to grant recipients. Rather it is found according to him in the discipline of the matching fund proviso that mandates applicants partner with civil sector forestry organizations-including nonprofits- to carry out forestry management plans. WUCFP coordinators, like their supervisor, primarily summarized their jobs as linking communities with these civil sector urban forestry consultants and contractors. The reason for this, as stated by the coordinators in their interviews, is that they believe the majority of Wisconsin's cities do not understand their forests' compositions and therefore need to develop a professional management plan to enhance the ecosystem services provided by their urban trees.

The WUCFP supervisor and coordinators noted in their interviews that many municipalities with 20,000 or more people have paid forestry staff with the expertise to professionally manage their forests. But the WUCFP coordinators are more concerned about how forest management plays out in smaller cities lacking their own expert staff. For example, many small and medium-sized communities in Wisconsin have departments of public works (DPW) that require their personnel to perform cross-over duties depending on seasonal labor needs. This practice is increasingly common as municipalities statewide cut back their DPW operating budgets. One WUCFP coordinator put it this way:

> [Small municipalities] are absolutely cutting back... there is a lot more diversification of duties. DPW is one of those areas that if we don't know what to do with it, we are going to put it there. Mosquito control isn't going to go to the clerk's office. I don't want to say it's a dumping grounds, but a lot of things get housed there because they think DPW can do that. Sanitation is included, they call it environmental services. Trees and trash.

WUCFP coordinators are concerned that forests in this situation are poorly managed as small communities lack expert-led management plans. WUCFP coordinators therefore work most closely with these smaller communities to educate citizens about the opportunity to seek WUCFP funds to assist them in generating a suitable management plan. However, even the most motivated citizens without certified, private input in their grant application are unlikely to get their grant proposal formally reviewed by the WUCFP. According to one coordinator this is because, "in most instances, inventories and management plans performed by nonprofessionals do not fit the criteria set out by the state."

Interested parties are therefore instructed to seek the expertise of people skilled in grant-writing for urban forestry. Ironically, the expert advice they need to hire cannot come from the WUCFP itself, but must come from nongovernmental professionals. This is because the coordinators are quite sensitive to their program's potential to jeopardize the sustainability of civil sector forestry organizations. One of the WUCFP coordinators said during his interview:

> If there are consultants out there doing the same thing as I am doing, I should not be doing it. I will not go into a community and do an inventory, ordinance, and hazardous tree inventory. I would not offer that to a community if there are those out there doing that for a living... We are pretty sensitive that there are urban forestry consultants out there and that we are not to be infringing on their ability to make money.

Community management of urban forestry therefore becomes the charge of civil sector organizations as WUCFP coordinators use the state bureaucracy and its grant funding to support the profitability of private professionals.

This civil sector capacity building by WUCFP and UCFP is certainly a form of roll-out neoliberalism. However, it is worth noting at this point how neoliberal hegemony through the practice of urban forestry is rolled out where it did not exist before. Gramscian analysis further reveals these bureaucracies are staffed with the integral state's traditional intellectuals who promote the production of ecosystem services through the active development of a market for professionalized forestry organizations. In doing so these 'deputies' subsidize private forestry organizations that are the integral state's newest vanguard in the civil sector constructing and promoting the positive cost/benefit ideology of ecosystem services (see also Cohen, 2004). In this sense the integral state is also exercising its capacity to function as an ethical state. Civil sector organizations that partner with UCFP and WUCFP like *Greening Milwaukee* and *Greening of Detroit* employ their own experts that generate and disseminate technical knowledge about urban forestry related ecosystems services. Thus these civil sector experts also become the ethical state's traditional intellectuals who work among and within diverse communities to harmonize common sense notions about urban ecology- and by extension build consent for ecological modernist agendas. They sell their forestry expertise to urban communities on the basis of enhancing sets of discreet ecosystem services provided by trees. Some services are easy to communicate to municipalities and homeowners alike because as investments their returns are easily priced on the market. Reduced energy production and consumption costs, increased home values, and increased retail customer traffic are readily quantifiable examples that save the state money and bolster the profitability of capital. Other discreet services like social cohesion and psychological wellbeing are less tangible but their positive market value is nonetheless assumed (Coley et al., 1997).

The pedagogy of the ethical state is therefore not only getting the word out to communities about proper ways of being in the world as environmental stewards, but also doing it in ways that bolster the hegemony of profit-oriented, market-based ideology. In other words UCFP and WUCFP pedagogy is not just about the trees as it appears on the surface; it is about the *'proper' market relations for producing* the trees within a capitalist economy. Common sense regarding urban ecology is thus (re)oriented based on the ethical state's ability to motivate people's participation in

urban forestry on the basis of their pocket books. To answer Barnett's criticism, this is precisely how power gets at people within new articulations of neoliberal hegemony: the benefits of trees are inextricably conflated with the promise of profitable market logic. To borrow from Krippner's perspective (2007), it is difficult to see the forest for the trees as verdant state policies that manipulate markets and their logic are naturalized through urban forestry practices.

3. Consent, coercion, and a political ecology of praxis

Any discussion of hegemony must eventually address the dialectic between consent and coercion. UCFP and WUCFP, as noted in the previous section, work to consolidate new forms of common sense concerning urban forests among a diverse array of people with differing convictions about forestry. These bureaucracies' actions to generate consent for market-mediated ecology represent the integral state's expansion of its capacity and legitimacy to regulate the larger market economy through the practice of urban forestry. Consent in the hegemonic moment of market-based urban forestry comes when communities agree to consult and employ a nongovernmental organization to write a grant, quantify and assess their trees, and develop a professionalized management plan. Little about this relation seems coercive, at least at first glance. But as Thomas points out, consent to hegemony for Gramsci "only becomes apparent when it is related to its dialectical distinction of coercion" (2009, p. 144).

It is more difficult, though, to determine how coercion is a part of this kind of granting process for urban forestry, particularly as it relates to Gramsci's way of thinking about the use of force within hegemony. He wrote coercion through force is reserved for those subaltern groups that actively or passively resist the dominant ideology (1971). This at first glance seems highly problematic for this thesis as there appear to be no overt acts of force used against those groups of people who do not participate in market-based forms of urban forestry. A more nuanced conception of force helps describe how coercion is dialectically intertwined with the production of consent to participate in the UCFP and WUCFP programs. This is especially the case when looking more closely at the *market forces* intrinsic to grant-based urban forestry provision and their outcomes.

UCFP and WUCFP depict the civil sector as an environmentally sound solution to an inevitable lack of government funding for forestry management. This ideology, however, contains and conceals a coercive aspect of market-based management promoted by these bureaucracies. Recipients of urban forestry funds, since they are not considered tree experts, *have* to agree to two certain terms before they are awarded financial assistance. Firstly, their plan for urban forestry must be low-cost to the state, and secondly it must transfer state funding through contracts to civil sector organizations. Thus participation is predicated on acceptance of market principles. Communities seeking forestry assistance are on their own if they do not accept or meet these criteria. There are other ways this relation is coercive.

The interviewee from NACT conceded that civil sector organizations like nonprofits are frequently staffed with professional experts that carry out their own standardized forestry plans without enough community input. She said this is because organizations that receive government funding usually carry out the mandates of the state granting agency in order to continue receiving money from that source (for more see Wolch, 1990). The NACT interviewee suggested the danger here is that state granting agencies direct nonprofits to "come in from the outside" and impose forestry agendas in urban communities with which they have little social connection. In doing so, the WUCFP, for example, is not *asking* what communities want from their forests, it is *telling* them they need to consult standardized outside experts- or else they will not get program funding for their forests. In this way these bureaucracies' market instruments regulate people's access to trees. Anyone who wants trees may be disinclined to question this coercive logic and consent to market-based strategies for ecosystem services as long as *some* kind of mechanism exists to help them manage their forests. This is a neoliberal hegemonic moment as urban forestry is predicated on narrow, economic-corporate interests including ecosystem services and private sector sustainability. Consent through the coercion of market force is problematic on yet another front, too.

The consent/coercion dialectic as mediated through market practice obfuscates our role as socio-natural actors who possess the capacity to engage with nature in various positive ways through our social labor. Valuing trees primarily as providers of discreet ecosystem services within the capitalist market requires a distinct division of labor that largely restricts their production to labor performed by state- sanctioned 'experts.' The argument might be made that civil sector experts who put themselves on the market with the assistance of UCFP and WUCFP are there for the benefit of everyone's urban forests. However, markets- including those for environmental services- are inherently discriminatory in their constitution based on factors of race, gender, socio-economic status, and the like (Pulido, 2000; Heynen, 2003; Bullard, 2005; Pellow and Brulle, 2005; Heynen et al., 2006). Coercion, in the form of market force, is therefore a problematic component of WUCFP because competitive grants *selectively* increase participation in urban forestry based on these attributes. Positive market response usually involves whites with high educational levels and higher-than-average household incomes (Perkins et al., 2004). By contrast the interviewees from the WUCFP, especially those coordinators that work in poorer regions of Wisconsin, mentioned that it is exceedingly difficult to make poor and minority communities aware of their program. Nonprofits that apply for and receive WUCFP funds do not seem to solve this problem, either.

The director of the nonprofit urban forestry program *Greening Milwaukee* receives WUCFP money for an "Adopt-A-Tree" program that works to reforest impoverished, central-city Milwaukee. He was frank about the people who typically participate in his program, however, when he stated they tend to "own their own homes and have incomes greater than 60,000 dollars per year." The NACT interviewee expressed her concern during her interview about the extreme difficulties and lack of success nonprofits have in (re)foresting poor inner-cities across the US for these reasons. Ultimately programs structured like WUCFP and *Greening Milwaukee* cannot be real agents of environmental change as structured because they are designed with the same selective parameters intrinsic to market hegemony that created urban ecological inequity in the first place.

All of this paints a rather grim picture for the possibility of urban environmental politics that get beyond far-flung market interests. But we can take cues from Gramsci who himself was no defeatist. He noted, "The realization of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge: it is a fact of knowledge, a philosophical fact" (1971, pp. 365–366). He thus forwarded his idea of the 'philosophy of praxis' that:

> . . .does not aim at the peaceful resolution of existing contradictions in history and society but is rather the very theory of these contradictions. It is not the instrument of government of the dominant groups in order to gain the consent of and exercise of hegemony over the subaltern classes; it is the expression of these subaltern classes who want to educate themselves in the art of government and who have an interest in knowing all truths.

But how does Gramsci's philosophy of praxis relate to urban forestry? Gramsci insisted that subaltern groups, if they are to construct their own hegemony, must recognize ideological limitations that hinder their ability to envision new ways of engaging material nature (1971). Haug perhaps puts it best when he says, "The philosophy of praxis is therefore in its own terms the self-enlightenment of human reality which arises as a break with all ideology in order to look with sober eyes at the active positions of humans to each other and to nature" (2001, p. 12). Fontana states this break with dominant ideology allows subaltern groups "to move from the immediate and particular sphere of narrow economic interest to a more universal, more encompassing form of interest which, to Gramsci, can only be political" (1996, p. 228).

It seems breaking with the dominant market paradigm in urban forestry should be a nearly impossible task. But as Ekers et al. suggest (2009, p. 290): "for Gramsci the environment becomes the educator. Hegemonic struggles concerning nature revolve around how people make sense of their relationship with the environment and thereby participate and modify the 'ensemble of relations' they live within." This means that new hegemony can be born from within an already existing one. This begs the question as to what possibilities UCFP and WUCFP have for producing a political ecology of praxis based on nonmarket relations to nature. All of the evidence mustered in this paper suggests these bureaucracies, civil sector organizations, and their traditional intellectuals use market logic that (at least inadvertently) limits rather than democratizes access to the production of urban forests. But their promotions of ecosystem services might just be the seeds that grow a new kind of social forest that contributes to an alternative hegemony.

Grant recipients, when they work with civil sector forestry consultants, do learn much about urban forestry because they form a new connection with trees and urban ecology in the process. In doing so, interviewees for this project suggest that participants gain their own sense of the value of trees and by extension become aware of what it takes to plant and maintain more of them in the city without the assistance of their agency. A WUCFP coordinator provided two such examples during her interview. She said:

> There have been some very innovative things done with our grants. The town of Greenvale has developed an extensive seed to shade tree nursery at each of their elementary schools, getting the students and teachers involved. They plant seeds, raise them, and then move them to new locations in town... they even created a promotional video. Memorial Park in Appleton did a tool kit called Tree Trunk. It is a curriculum that when kids go to the park, there are different stations learning about trees.

The coordinator went onto suggest these examples demonstrate citizens are interested in getting other people and businesses in their communities to sponsor tree planting and stewardship.

These examples also demonstrate that in some instances WUCFP is getting young people working with urban trees. There is the possibility through their work that they will grow up more connected to urban forestry which might in turn get them to spend more time thinking about their relationship with nature and their own capacity to create alternative urban environments. Whether or not these kinds of citizen initiatives are the beginning of a new political ecology of praxis or rather a continuance of neoliberal self-help strategies remains unanswered at this point in time. But the very possibility of something novel emerging makes them worth paying attention to through the long term. Ultimately, however, a political ecology of praxis will have to be founded by the people who create their own common sense knowledge about urban forestry- those who Gramsci would call organic intellectuals. This is especially the case in relation to the need to create ideology that endorses the production of urban ecologies by means other than market initiatives. If the goal is to subvert neoliberal hegemony, then, there is also a need to think about whether or not trees should continue to be valued and promoted on the basis of ecosystem services. Many questions thus remain in regard to its formulation.

4. In conclusion: Gleaning good sense from common sense urban forestry

Gramsci, while writing about laissez-faire economics, pointed out that liberal economists adhere to the separation between state activity and civil society institutions, including the market economy. He suggested this was not an organic distinction, but rather a methodological separation that disguises the role civil society plays in consolidating the state's regulatory legitimacy (1971). This methodological separation inherent to liberalism posed no shortage of challenges for this particular study of urban forestry. It seems on the surface that a mundane activity like grant-based urban forestry should have little to do with neoliberal agendas. But this is precisely why Gramsci is still relevant in our times- capitalist hegemony is exercised in our lived experiences in virtually unintelligible and therefore surprising ways (Loftus, 2009; Thomas, 2009).

Gramsci, in formulating his philosophy of praxis, believed our common sense views of the world are at best fragmented, impartial, and at worst contradictory. He recognized a new emancipatory hegemony is therefore dependent on subaltern segments of society first becoming aware of the contradictions within common sense that guide the social relations in which they live. This awareness is, however, a difficult process. Grant-based urban forestry is a good example because it intuitively seems like a benevolent way to extend urban forests through the ubiquity and political neutrality of markets. But this study has demonstrated that urban forestry as mobilized through markets for profitable ecosystem services is inherently selective. Urban forestry, as practiced then, masks deeply coercive and disempowering socio-natural relationships that rest on a false, yet common sense, separation of state and economic spheres. This need not be interpreted as a neoliberal conspiracy by UCFP and WUCFP administrators and nonprofit organizers. Rather these passionate folks demonstrated in their interviews their strong convictions that urban forests provide a higher quality of life for people regardless of race or class, and should therefore be enhanced wherever possible. Ultimately, these traditional intellectuals fail to recognize their efforts are based on a false distinction; the result being their limited efforts to extend urban forestry through grants more successfully expand the purview of capitalist market ideology to new realms and spaces.

How will participants become aware of the contradiction between UCFP/WUCFP goals and outcomes and begin to build a political ecology of praxis? It is difficult to envision alternative forms of urban forestry emerging given the hegemonic influence of 'common sense' market logics that underpin granting programs. However, as Gramsci mentioned, kernels of good sense with promise for an alternative hegemony can be found within common sense paradigms that reinforce extant hegemony. Thus there are likely some common sense aspects of market-mediated forestry that might just point us in key directions for a better future. Engagement with urban trees, even through 'expert'-led granting programs, gets people thinking about urban ecology. Perhaps they will desire to produce a more extensive and equitable urban forest as a result? If so, participants may then realize grant-based urban forestry is actually a coercive market relation that is insufficient to challenge the status quo- which for poor communities is often neglected urban ecology that fails to better their everyday living conditions. A radical political ecology of praxis can spring forth the moment this realization becomes widespread.

Burawoy, commenting on Gramsci's political commitments, notes this kind of transformative struggle necessitates making the subject matter explicitly *political* in the first instance to consolidate its legitimacy as a field of action (2003). Here, another kernel of good sense exists within current forestry practice as politicization is already happening to a small degree. Interviewees note that some citizens who interact with UCFP, WUCFP, and nonprofits petition their elected officials for increased support for urban forestry efforts. First steps then will be to intensify this politicization by exposing coercive forestry granting systems as inherently insufficient/uneven and thus scrapping them altogether in favor of supporting something much more comprehensive. This means sustainability of nonprofits and the profitability of consultants should no longer be a prominent concern in promoting urban forestry. In their place a new set of organic, grassroots coalitions can emerge to provide *the people* living in all urban areas the opportunity to formulate and carry out *their own* forestry management plans independent of coercive market forces. These coalitions will not be top-down, bureaucratic structures with standardized agendas and supposedly nonpartisan politics. Rather they need be comprised of citizens- as organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense- with deep political commitments to equitable urban ecology who will ask their neighbors what *they* need and want from their forests. This challenge is going to be difficult because Grove et al. note that some people living in cities do not want trees because of cultural preferences and other practical considerations (2006). This is in fact a welcome complication; in these instances grassroots groups should design and construct their own alternative forms of urban ecology that provide them similar benefits to those produced by urban trees.

Clearly, subaltern groups face many challenges when confronting neoliberal hegemony with radical praxis. But the struggle to wrest the control of urban ecologies away from political society and its capitalist interests is being waged everyday with varying levels of success in a diversity of cities including New York, Toronto, Los Angeles, and even Milwaukee. Groups of organic intellectuals in these cities and countless others work outside the integral state's pedagogical bureaucracy. In doing so they expose the ideological contradictions that put market considerations before healthy and equitable urban ecologies including gardens (Smith and Kurtz, 2003), riverways and waterfronts (Desfor and Keil, 2004; Wolch, 2007), and forests (Perkins, 2009a). Those of us who do research on these struggles can aid a radical political ecology of praxis by making sure our urban environmental research, in Gramsci's words, 'burst simultaneously into political life' (1971, p. 132). Forests can also help us with this struggle for a better urban ecological future because trees will work beside everyone once we equitably incorporate them into our cities.

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